



STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Meeting. The State Soil Conservation Committee held a teleconference meeting on October 6, 2016, in Des Moines. The following was discussed.

Field Services. Vince Sitzman, Chief, Field Services Bureau, stated that \$2.1 million was available as a supplemental allocation from the Conservation Cost Share Program. The funds were distributed in September, and 44 of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts applied for funding. Staffing changes were also discussed and included hiring Project Coordinators for the following:

- Big Creek/Easter Lake Outreach Coordinator in Boone and Polk counties.
- South Skunk Water Quality Initiative (WQI) Project in Henry, Lee, Van Buren, and Jefferson counties.
- Headwaters of the North Raccoon River WQI Project in Buena Vista and Pocahontas counties.
- Deep Creek WQI Project in Plymouth County.
- West Branch of the Floyd River WQI Project in Sioux County.

Water Resources. Jake Hansen, Chief, Water Resource Bureau, discussed the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The number of acres that can be enrolled nationwide has been lowered from 26.0 million to 24.0 million as of October 1, 2016. The federal Farm Service Agency estimated there were approximately 23.0 million acres enrolled in the Program, so Iowa landowners still have an opportunity to participate.

Mines and Minerals. Susan Kozak, Chief, Minerals Bureau, stated the Bureau was evaluating staff needs due to the recent resignation of a Project Coordinator. She also reported a field day will be held on October 19 at the Larkin abandoned mines site in Wapello County.

Director Report. Jim Gillespie, Director of the Soil Conservation Division, reported that there are 45 WQI demonstration projects. This includes 16 projects in targeted watersheds, seven that are using innovative approaches, and 22 urban projects. The Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (DALs) and the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service recently signed a \$9.5 million contract for a grant from the federal Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP). This grant was awarded for the Midwest Agriculture Water Quality Partnership that includes over 40 partners with an additional \$38.0 million in nonfederal funds. The Partnership will create an innovative public-private collaboration to advance a science-based approach for reducing nutrient loss and for improving water quality, soil health, and habitats.

State Forest Nursery. Paul Tauke, State Forester, reported that a price increase took effect on October 1, 2016, on bareroot stock sold at the State Forest Nursery. The last price increase at the Nursery was in 2009. The Department of Natural Resources is preparing a report for the General Assembly about the operations at the State Forest Nursery that will be submitted by December 1, 2016.

Next Meeting. The next meeting will be held on November 3, 2016, in Des Moines.

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